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Obituary

FRANCIS WILLIAM FROST

It was with sadness that the Club was informed of the death of our President, Frank Frost, aged 74 years.

Frank died of a heart attack on the 21st April 1981, and was cremated at Amos Vale Cemetery, Bristol, one week later; the Club was very well represented.

His interest in caving started at a very early age, being taken by his father sometime in 1913 to 'The People's Palace' in Bristol, where Mr. H.E. Balch gave a talk on the Mendip caves.

This was further stirred when Professor E.K. Tratman invited him to attend a lecture given by Professor Fawcett at the U.B.S.S. in 1924.

Frank enlisted the help of his brothers and explored all the known caves of Mendip. They travelled from Bristol by bicycle, practically the only method of transport in those days. On many occasions, lightweight camping gear had to be carried, so quite a load had to be pushed up the hills to Mendip. In those days, unless you were a member of the U.B.S.S. or M.N.R.C. you had to make all your own ladders. Frank found a way to make very small sections which could be carried on the back of a cycle. This was a skill in which he was interested right up to the present day.

A few weeks after the meeting at Digger Harris's house on November 4th, 1934, where it was decided to form the Wessex Cave Club, I asked Frank if he intended to join the Club. He said he would wait and see if it lasted or not. Fortunately for the Wessex, a few months later he decided to become a member. He was soon elected to the Committee and remained a member until he was appointed Honorary Secretary in 1940, owing to Hywel Murrell's resignation due to war service.

In the years around 1935 his main interest was helping Graham Balcombe at Waldegrave Swallet. Later he became involved with him during the early dives at Wookey.

In 1936 he was the Club's representative working in conjunction with the B.S.A. on their Inland Water Survey, to which he gave considerable time and practical support.

During the war years Frank held the Club together by keeping in touch with members. Most of us paid a visit to his house when on leave; this usually ended up with a cave trip during the weekend.

One of Frank's ambitions was for the Club to obtain its own headquarters. The first HQ, the Grange, situated near the Castle of Comfort, had to be given up, probably due to expense during the war. In 1946 Gerard Platten very kindly gave the Club a small hut. Frank obtained permission for it to be erected near Eastwater Cavern; this was done under his supervision.

Frank and his team were responsible for finding Beechbarrow, and later the Hillgrove hut. He was also very much involved in paving the way for the present luxurious headquarters

which is the envy of most British cave clubs.

In 1961, owing to ill health, it was thought by many members that Frank had done his stint, and it was time he gave up the office of Hon. Sec.; this he agreed to do. In view of his tremendous services to the Club over so many years he was asked to take over the office of President, which had been vacant since the death of Mr H.E. Balch. Frank was very pleased to accept this position.

As President, Frank still took an active interest in the affairs of the Club and helped to guide it along the right path. This is perhaps the reason why the Wessex has been so lucky in its officers over the last twenty years which in turn has made it one of the finest and most balanced caving clubs in Britain.

Frank visited and caved in all the main localities of England and South Wales, and was one of the first to arrange club trips to the caving areas of France in 1948 and 1950.

He was employed by the Post Office as a telephone engineer; very soon his talents were recognised and until his retirement he was an instructor and lecturer at the G.P.O. Telephone School.

Frank's main interest was the Wessex Cave Club, and most of his hobbies were connected in some way with caving. He was a keen supporter of the Mendip Rescue Organisation and remained a Warden until his death. He was a very skilled photographer, and his early photographs provide an interesting insight into caves and caving from the thirties onward. Apart from caving, he enjoyed watching rugby on television and working in his garden.

Our sympathy must go to his wife, Ivy.

He was perhaps one of the most prominent figures in the Wessex Cave Club since its formation, and he will be missed from his regular place, chairing the A.G.M.

G. Tudgay

CLUB NEWS

(Based on the Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on May 17th)

President and Trustees The recent death of Frank Frost means that the Club is without a President, and a full quota of Trustees. In order to comply not only with the rules, but also with the Trustees Act (1925) Section 36, we require four Trustees, appointed by the President on behalf of the Club. However, the Committee feels that no haste is required in filling the vacancies.

The libellous and grossly disrespectful account of Frank's life and influence on the Club, published in another magazine is in such bad taste that it is thought that it could never have been published had its author not also been the magazine's editor. The accusation of censorship levelled at Geoff Tudgay and Phil Hendy is categorically denied. They simply uphold the right to publish any contribution first in the journal for which it was originally intended. To conclude the matter, Frank's best and most enduring testimonial must be the Club and its headquarters which he left behind him.

Phil Davies, Luke Devenish and Phil Hendy have recently been sorting and cataloguing a large number of Frank's 35mm and magic lantern slides, which depict a wide variety of events including the 1948 Club trip to France, and early cave diving on Mendip. It is hoped to be able to present a slide show in due course.

Tackle Dave Morrison organised a highly successful ladder-making session on May 16th, during which several members helped to make seven 25ft and two 12½ft ladders by the pin-and-araldite method. Subsequently, the Committee authorised expenditure to allow the purchase of sufficient materials to make 1000ft of ladder, using thick-walled rungs and taper pins. Such rungs can be easily reclaimed; indeed some similar rungs are still in use after 20 years!

The wire used will not be the cheapest, but it is extra flexible, to reduce the likelihood of damage by kinking. Even so, care is still required when using ladders, as some members are still incapable of ensuring its proper use. You are advised to check ladders when you unroll them to make sure that no rungs have passed back on themselves through the wires.

Bob Drake has made six brass pullies, which will be put in use for double lifelining only, when suitable shackles have been obtained.

The tackle store in the extension has been started, and should soon be in use. This will allow better tackle care and control.

Upper Pitts Increasing costs, and necessary repairs and alterations have meant that the Committee has had to increase hut fees, with effect from May 22nd:

Per Night:	Members	£1.00
	Guests	£1.50
	Day Fees	£0.50 (use conscience box)

Day fees include the use of the HQ by members or guests for cooking and/or changing, and for the use of tackle by non-members included in a Club trip. Tackle can only be used by non-members when at least one Wessex member is present on the trip. That member will be responsible for its safe use and prompt return.

The increasing cost of oil means that inefficiencies in the central heating and hot water system can no longer be tolerated. Glyn Bolt is organising a renovation of the system, to include a larger tank and simplification of the timers. A donation towards the cost by Roger Robinson has been gratefully accepted. In the longer term, the Committee may need to consider cavity insulation and the construction of storm porches.

John Ham has recently filled the potholes and levelled the drive. The surface will last a lot longer if drivers slow right down when they drive in or out.

The electricity meters in the hall are running at a substantial loss, and are soon to be replaced with 10p versions. Mike York has started the wiring in the extension.

The Hut Warden is concerned that the HQ is not being cleaned regularly. A mop and brushes can be found in the changing room, and there are supplies of detergent and bleach in the kitchen.

MRO and First Aid Boxes The profits from last year's bonfire night have now been spent on replenishing these boxes.

1981 Club Dinner To be held at the Hunter's Lodge Inn and the Caveman Restaurant, Cheddar, on Saturday October 17. An application form for Dinner tickets is enclosed in this Journal. Further details will be announced later.

Thefts Despite the fact that a group of thieves were caught earlier this year, losses are still taking place from cars parked near caves and in local beauty spots. The Charterhouse area is worst affected. Please make sure that if you must leave valuables or even dry gear in cars, it is locked in the boot. Valuables can

be locked up at Upper Pitts - ask any Committee member to do this for you.

NCA - Tackle and Equipment Sub-Committee The Southern Council is still concerned at the actions of this group, and a Wessex motion was passed at the recent CSCC ACM to the effect that Dave Elliot, the sub-committee's convenor, is asked to reaffirm his acceptance of his group's terms of reference.

Because of poor attendance at Southern Council meetings, it is intended to reduce the quorum to 25%.

Club Trundles Four cavers, including one prospective member, spent an enjoyable afternoon trundling round Tyning's Barrows Swallet. The next Club Trundle will be in Eastwater, on July 11th.

Photographic/ Art Competition Hurry with your entries, which should be sent to Alison Moody, c/o Upper Pitts, by September 4th.

Fountain Cottage This cottage on Priddy Green, opposite the Sink, was auctioned by the RMA, Sandhurst, recently. The buyers were Pete and Alison Moody. After all their digging and surveying in Swildon's, don't be surprised if one day soon they have their own private entrance to the cave.

New Members We welcome the following new members, elected at the March 15th Committee Meeting:

Walter Albrecht Am Waldesrand, 07086 Ohmenheim, West Germany.

Peter John Watts 1 Fairfield Cottages, Kingsway, Wilton, Salisbury, Wilts.

Invitation Oliver Lloyd cordially invites all members of the Club to his 70th birthday celebration in the Old Grotto of Swildon's Hole on Tuesday 4th August 1981. Meet on the upper green at Priddy at 5pm. There will be sherry and cake; catering by Nick Barrington.

MENDIP NEWS

New Series in Swildon's Whilst wombling round the Round Trip in Swildon's Hole during the Spring Bank Holiday, Alison Moody found some time on her hands. While waiting for the rest of the party to catch up, near the Fault Chamber junction, she casually lifted a boulder from the floor ... to reveal an inviting opening!! Wriggling down a steep incline, she just managed to avoid carrying on down a pitch. The rest of the party caught her up, and the pitch was quickly rigged. It went for 50ft, belling out at the bottom to enter an 8ft diameter tube. Downslope went to a mud choke, whilst upstream the passage steeply ascended, to a climb into the roof. It is guessed to run north - south, which makes it difficult to link in with the rest of the known cave. Work continues.

Save our Sabre-Toothed Tiger Somerset County Council has rejected a plan by Mixconcrete Ltd. to extend its quarry at Westbury-sub-Mendip. The Council said that further development would destroy the remains of fossil extinct mammals such as the scimitar cat, Etruscan rhinoceros and bear, which make the site so important to palaeontologists. Westbury Quarry is also in an AONB. It may be noted that the reasons given by SCC for the rejection are similar to those given by those who oppose SCC's plan to extend Underwood Quarry on Milton Hill, Wells.

Fairy Cave Quarry Cerberus S. S. have been told by Hobbs Quarries to gate all the quarry caves, as a result of its interpretation of the Health and Safety at Work Act. A leader will be necessary when visiting any of the caves in the quarry.

Lamb Leer Oliver Lloyd and the U.B.S.S. have repaired the gate and lock, though the remaining repairs have still to be done.

Mine shafts on Blackmoor The area of gruffy ground south of the Blackmoor area at Charterhouse contains, as many of you know, a number of short mine- shafts. They have been covered with locked grilles by the owners, the University of Bristol Department of Botany, to prevent accidental descent by the unwary. They are concerned by recent extensive damage to these grilles. According to Tom Elkin of the Charterhouse Outdoor Activities Centre, there is no reason to damage these grilles as most cavers find that they can easily slip between the bars - which also make excellent belay points. There is no restriction on access to these shafts, so please use some common sense when paying them a visit.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONS

Call-out-Procedure The correct call-out procedure in any part of the country is to go to the nearest phone, DIAL 999 AND ASK FOR POLICE. When the Police reply, ask for CAVE RESCUE. MRO reminds us that having done this, REMAIN BY THE PHONE UNTIL CONTACTED BY A RESCUE WARIEN. The reason for this is that the Warden first called can then make a more accurate assessment of the situation before deciding on what action to take.

Otter Hole In order to allow the cave to 'recuperate', all trips must be with a leader from one of four clubs. Access will therefore be restricted, and the cave is fully booked for many weekends to come.

Ogof Capel Unknown, cavers have upset locals by blasting in this Gwent cave, beneath the Drum and Monkey inn. The local feeling is best described as 'anti-caver' at present.

Carbide ban in SWCC-controlled Caves SWCC intends to ban the use of carbide in all the caves it controls, and this is being recommended to the OFD and Agen Allwedd management committees. SWCC has introduced a new tally system at its HQ which requires more information to be logged than before. Please ensure that the tickets are completed fully.

Yorkshire Following the unfortunate death of Mark Woodhouse, the issue of permits for Casterton Fell will be undertaken, for the time being, by Andy Hall, 46e Manor House Close, Leyland, Preston, Lancs.

There is no access to caves in Luton Dale at present.

Following the sale of North Cote Farm, the goodwill fee for Alum Pot should be paid at a cottage in the village, and there is a notice to that effect at the beginning of the lane. Access is unaffected.

Derbyshire Matlock Mines - Jugholes is open. Cumberland entrance is blocked. The top and middle entrances to Devonshire are grilled but access is still possible via the bottom entrance.

Entrance to Magpie Sough has been prevented by an iron grille. DCA are endeavouring to sort things out.

It is reported that at last year's Priddy Fair, a pickpocket was operating around the sideshows. On being spotted, he made a run for it, and was almost apprehended when he climbed up the mast on Pen Hill.

The Police immediately threw a ring round the mast, whereupon the manager came out and gave them a goldfish.

Our condolences go to the CDG member who took up sky-diving. His aqualung failed to deploy!

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer for the Year ending
31st January 1981

It will now be known widely that Howard Kenney died unexpectedly last summer. Whilst I have paid tribute to his work for caving in the pages of the Wessex Gave Club Journal, I am sure that the whole community of cavers on Mendip will also appreciate me recording here the significant contribution that Howard made as the first post-War secretary and treasurer of MRO. Our good relations with the Police, for whom we are really agents during incidents, and the interest of the active cavers upon whom successful rescues depend can be traced back to this re-forming of the MRO. As this took place exactly thirty years ago, it seems appropriate to look back over the record and so this report is followed by a diary of all post-War call-outs apart from my usual annual log of incidents. No doubt the statisticians will find much to do with the former and I have grouped call-outs into the categories used both nationally and by kindred cave rescue organisations to help them in this. My only observation here is the coincidence that MRO began and ended this thirty-year period by helping friends in South Wales. Such mutual support is as strong as ever.

Another coincidence in our review of the years concerns the opening of a new museum at Wookey Hole Cave last Easter. The wide range of exhibits linked with caving is mainly the work of Dr. William Stanton and MRO was pleased to donate some now historic pieces of rescue equipment for display. Appropriately D. Oliver Lloyd who followed Howard Kenney as secretary and treasurer of MRO from 1956-72 officially opened this museum. Now, thousands of visitors to Mendip each year have an opportunity to see how cavers help themselves in rescue work. Moreover, from the generous donation given by Wookey Hole Caves for this gear we have been able to replace these old items with up-to-date equipment. The Little Dragon warm air breather, in particular, has already proved invaluable.

The transfer of the Police control for cave rescue alerts to Yeovil has proved a success. A small group of wardens were invited to visit the new Divisional Headquarters there and it was most helpful to talk to the officers who actually receive and relay the emergency calls so that we know each other and the best ways to work. Indeed, with our own radio communications, the effective response times on call-outs have noticeably speeded up as the log of last year's incidents shows. Improvements of this nature would not be possible without the support of so many cavers who willingly keep in touch with rescue matters. For them, we had a useful evening on radio communications around Mendip under Eric Dunford's direction and open days to handle special equipment in the comfort of the Belfry are always welcome. It is also good to record that some local cavers have joined in the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue teams who were in action for the first time last autumn under the able leadership of Guy Summers.

Looking ahead and beyond Mendip, we maintain our links with other organisations in the South West England Rescue Association and, of course, are pleased to contribute to the current upsurge of interest in the Cave Rescue Council nationally. Further afield in Ireland, I am grateful to Dr. Oliver Lloyd in arranging for the MRO gear traditionally held for Mendip cavers visiting County Clare to be housed about as centrally as it could be to the caves at Keane's Hotel, Lisdoonvama. Dr. Donald Thomson has brought the work of MRO to the notice of the medical world through the pages of no less than the British Medical Journal (for 24th January 1981). It seems that "Fred's Boot" treatment may well become enshrined in clinical jargon of the future!

As usual, I close my report by presenting audited accounts for last year over page. Perhaps these are best summarised by noting that MRO's assets have nearly doubled during a period in which most other organisations have experienced hardships financially. To the many who help cave rescue work in this way, I am especially grateful, and particularly to all the individuals who give so generously to the collection box at Rocksport in Wells.

J.D. Hanwell.
Hon Secretary & Treasurer

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st January 1981

<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	£	£
<u>Income</u>			
322 Donations - through general appeal			575
71 Donations - from rescued parties			105
11 Interest on Deposit Account			14
58 Hire of MRO Nife cells			30
30 Sale of surplus equipment			-
65 Raffle for donated rucksack			-
			724
<u>Less Expenditure</u>			
Equipment - through Wookey Hole Caves Ltd			
- for Little Dragon Resuscitator donated		124	
70 - Hauling and stretchers		58	
307 - Lighting and Nife cells		4	
42 - Other general supplies		10	
10 Insurance of equipment		20	
29 Postage, stationary, duplicating, etc.		74	
- Share of Belfry telephone rental (Feb 79 - Jul 80)		36	
10 Levies to CRC and SWERA		5	
101 Radio equipment		92	
19 Annual Radio licence to Home Office (to Mar 81)		-	
- Maintenance to Belfry Depot.		7	
		430	
588	Total expenditure		
(£31)	Surplus/(deficit) for period		£294

Balance Sheet as at December 31. 1981

CURRENT ASSETS

100	Balance at Bank – deposit account	100
222	Balance at Bank – current account	517
11	Cash with Hon. Treasurer and equipment Warden	10
£333		£627
Representing:		
<u>Accumulated funds</u>		
364	Balance at February 1, 1981	
(31)	(Subtract deficit to 31 Jan 80) Add Surplus for year	294
£333		£627

J.D. Hanwell, Hon. Treasurer, 50 Wells Rd.. Wookey Hole

I have reviewed the above accounts which have been prepared from the books and records of the Mendip Rescue Organization. In my opinion, and to the best of my knowledge, these accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the Organization's funds as at January 31st 1981, and of the surplus for the year ending on that date.

Richard Chant, A.C.A., F.T.I.I., 21st February 1981, at 44 Wells Rd., Wookey Hole

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

Thirty years of call-outs up to the end of January 1981

The MRO re-formed after the 1939-45 War during 1951. Meetings were held between local cavers and the Police on 15th April, 6th May, 14th October and 25th November from which the present organisation and call-out procedures emerged. The first annual meeting of MRO Wardens followed on Sunday 15th March 1953 in the Spelaeological Rooms at the University of Bristol. C.H. Kenney was the Honorary Secretary and he reminded those present that "the object of the meeting was to apply any lessons learnt from recent incidents". We now have thirty years of incidents to review as given in the diary of call-outs below.

1951

August Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, South Wales 2 Floods, trapped

1952

January Drunkard's Hole 4+ Boulder fall, trapped

June G.B. Cavern 1 Fall, injured ankle

1953

2nd May Read's Cavern 2+ Lost

21st May Swildon's Hole 2 Lost, lights failed

6th June Rod's Pot 1 Fall, badly bruised

1954

21st Mar Rod's Pot 1 Fall, broken leg

1955

Easter Longwood Swallet ? ?

Later Eastwater Cavern 4+ Lost

1956

4th May Swildon's Hole 1 Exhaustion

4th May Sidcot Swallet 1 Trapped, stuck

11th Nov Stoke Lane Slocker 2 Trapped, lights failed

1957

13th Jan Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire 1 Trapped, stuck

17th Mar Eastwater Cavern 1 Fall, head injuries, broken ribs

1958

21st Feb Swildon's Hole 4 Trapped, tackle

6th April Goatchurch Cavern 1 Fall, broken leg

27th July Eastwater Cavern 1 Trapped, stuck, exhaustion

14th Dec Logwood Swallet 5 Lost, lights failed

1959

17th Jan Swildon's Hole 1 Exhaustion, fatal hypothermia

1st Oct Goatchurch Cavern 3 Lost, lights failed

1960

24th Jan St. Cuthbert's Swallet 10 Floods, trapped

2/3rd May General search of all caves 2 Missing cavers

30th July Eastwater Cavern 1 Fall, fatal chest and back injuries

27th Aug Swildon's Hole 14 Floods, trapped

27th Aug St. Cuthbert's Swallet 6+ Floods, trapped

23rd Oct Longwood Swallet 1 Fall, head injuries

23rd Nov Swildon's Hole 1 Exhaustion

<u>1961</u>			
31st Mar	Longwood Swallet	4+	Trapped, lights failed
1st April	Swildon's Hole	4+	Alert, lights failed
<u>1962</u>			
3rd Feb	G.B. Cavern	1	Fall, head injuries
1st April	Combe Down Stone Mines, Bath	6	Lost
30th May	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken arm
3rd Nov	St. Cuthberts's Mineries Pool	1	Drowning (cave diver)
<u>1963</u>			
17th Mar	Longwood Swallet	1	Floods, fatal hypothermia
8th July	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Missing person
5th Oct	Longwood Swallet	3	Floods, overdue
30th Oct	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, exposure
17th Nov	Swildon's Hole	11	Floods, trapped
<u>1964</u>			
4th Jan	Swildon's Hole	6+	Trapped, tackle
9/10th Feb	Llethrid Cave, South Wales	1	Fall, broken leg
7th June	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, fractured skull
3rd Aug	Swildon's Hole	6	Trapped, tackle
21st Oct	Eastwater Cavern	1	Trapped, stuck
<u>1965</u>			
21st Feb	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
7th June	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
19th July	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue, lights failed
25th July	Swildon's Hole	7	Floods, trapped
<u>1966</u>			
12th Feb	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, exhaustion, exposure
27th Feb	St. Cuthberts's Swallet	1	Fall, head and ankle injuries
13th Mar	Sidcot Swallet	1	Fall, ankle hurt, lights failed
15th May	Swildon's Hole	2	Lost, lights failed
3rd June	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, broken ankle
6th Aug	Swildon's Hole	4	Floods, fall, exhaustion
20th Aug	St. Cuthberts's Swallet	1	Fall, shoulder injured
22nd Oct	Swildon's Hole	2+	Floods, trapped
26th Nov	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, shoulder hurt
22nd Dec	Swildon's Hole	3	Lost, exhaustion
26th Dec	Cuckoo Cleaves	2	Boulder fall, alert
30th Dec	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped, (locked in)
<u>1967</u>			
28th Jan	Stoke Lane Slocker	1	Floods, trapped
26th Mar	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped, tackle
5th May	Eastwater Cavern	1	Trapped, stuck
11th June	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg
14th Oct	Swildon's Hole	1	Floods, exhaustion
28th Oct	Swildon's Hole	?	Floods, trapped
29th Oct	Lamb Leer	1	Fall, severe bruising
8th Nov	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
<u>1968</u>			
10th Mar	Cuckoo Cleaves	12+	Trapped, tackle
13th April	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
12th May	Nine Barrows Swallet	1	Fall, broken leg
26th May	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion

1969

15th Mar	Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire	2	Lost, lights failed
23rd Mar	G.B. Cavern	3	Trapped (locked in)
15th June	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
25th Oct	Stoke Lane Slocker	3	Lost
2nd Nov	Swildon's Hole	4	Lost
27th Nov	Rod's Pot	2	Lost, lights failed
14th Dec	G.B. Cavern	4	Trapped (locked in)
27th Dec	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion

1970

3rd May	Goatchurch Cavern	2	Lost, lights failed
9th May	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, injured ankle
1st June	Agen Allwedd, South Wales	2	Standby
5th July	Swildon's Hole	2	Lost
26th July	Sidcot Swallet	6+	Overdue
4th Aug	Goatchurch Cavern	6	Search
13th Sep	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue
11th Oct	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Boulder Fall, head injuries
28th Nov	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured shoulder
29th Nov	Rod's pot	1	Fall, injured knee
28th Dec	Longwood Swallet	?	Overdue

1971

24th Jan	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, stuck
23rd May	Porth-yr-Ogof, South Wales	1	Diving fatality, search
21st Aug	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Boulder Fall, injured shoulder
16th Oct	G.B. Cavern	1	Boulder Fall, bruised leg
28th Nov	Eastwater Cavern	6	Floods, exhaustion

1972

15th Jan	Ogof Fach, South Wales	1	Standby (divers)
4th Feb	Search of sites around Priddy	1	Suicide
27th Feb	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
7th Mar	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Caver collapsed, unconscious
4th April	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped, tackle
10th April	Stoke Lane Slocker	1	Trapped, floods
28th April	Rod's Pot	1	Lost, light failed
28th June	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Overdue
24th July	General alert	1	Overdue
22nd Aug	Brockley Combe search (mines)	1	Missing person
3rd Oct	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
8th Oct	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
25th Oct	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured leg
26th Oct	Stoke Lane Slocker	4	Overdue
25th Nov	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
17th Dec	Read's Cavern	3	Lost
21st Dec	Eastwater Cavern	5	Trapped, tackle

1973

28th Jan	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, head and ankle injuries
28th Jan	Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire	8	Lost
15th April	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg
24th April	Swildon's Hole	3	Trapped, tackle
24th June	Stoke Lane Slocker	?	Floods, alert
30th June	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, injured shoulder
30th June	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries
22nd July	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped stuck
27th Oct	Sidcot Swallet	5	Lights failed, panic

12th Nov	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, fractured pelvis
1st Dec	Eastwater Cavern	?	Overdue
<u>1974</u>			
10th Jan	Sludge Pit	?	Overdue
19th Jan	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg
19th Jan	Eastwater Cavern	3	Overdue
20th Jan	General Alert	1	Overdue
27th Jan	Eastwater Cavern	?	Overdue
3rd Feb	Eastwater Cavern	8	Overdue
15th June	Agen Allwedd, South Wales	1	Diving fatality
29th June	Lamb Leer	2	Falls, multiple injuries
21st Sep	Mangle Hole	4	Overdue
13th Oct	Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire	5	Lost, lights failed
26th Oct	Goatchurch Cavern	?	Overdue
16th Nov	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, unwilling to dive sump
23rd Nov	Nine Barrows Swallet	5	Overdue
8th Dec	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped stuck
<u>1975</u>			
1st Jan	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue
10th May	Swildon's Hole	5	Overdue
26th May	Burrington Combe	4	Lost
29th June	Blacknor Hole, Portland, Dorset	1	Boulder fall, broken leg
30th June	Ubley Warren Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
31st Aug	Stoke Lane Slocker	2	Overdue
13th Sep	Stoke Lane Slocker	?	Floods, alert
2nd Nov	Eastwater Cavern	8	Overdue
9th Nov	Swildon's Hole	5	Overdue
6th Dec	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured knee
<u>1976</u>			
19th Feb	Sludge Pit	?	Overdue
21st Feb	G.B. cavern	1	Fall, broken shoulder
17th Mar	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured shoulder
5th July	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
4th Sep	Rhino Rift	?	Overdue
5th Sep	Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire	4	Lost, lights failed
4th Oct	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured leg
<u>1977</u>			
16th Jan	Stoke Lane Slocker	?	Alert
6th Feb	Swildon's Hole	1	Exposure
3rd April	Manor Farm Swallet	?	Trapped, lights failed
11th June	Stoke Lane Slocker	8	Trapped, floods
11th July	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, unwilling to dive sump
6th Aug	Swildon's Hole	4	Lost lights failed
27th Aug	Lamb Leer	1	Exhaustion
11th Sep	Read's Cavern	4	Overdue
24th Sep	Ilam Rising, Derbyshire	1	Diving fatality (standby)
28th Sep	Swildon's Hole	?	Alert
29th Oct	Eastwater Cavern	4	Overdue
20th Nov	Cuckoo Cleaves	2	Trapped, stuck
20th Nov	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
<u>1978</u>			
5th Mar	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue
14/15th Sep	Search of wells, Glastonbury	?	Presumed missing person
17th Sep	Read's Cavern	5	Lost

1st Oct	Mangle Hole	?	Overdue
2nd Oct	Lamb Leer	7	Overdue
9th Dec	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
31st Dec	Charterhouse hostel	6	Snowbound children evacuated

1979

8th Mar	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured back
22nd April	Longwood Swallet	1	Exhaustion
2nd July	Combe Down Stone Mines, Bath	1	Lost, lights failed
16th Sep	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, injured knee
17th Nov	Thrupe Lane Swallet	1	Fall, multiple injuries
24th Nov	Manor Farm Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries
9th Dec	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
27th Dec	Swildon's Hole	4	Trapped, floods

1980

3rd Feb	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
24th Feb	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
22nd Feb	Cuckoo Cleeves	1	Fall, broken leg
11th April	Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire	?	Presumed missing children
5th May	Browne's Folly Mine, Wiltshire	7	Lost, lights failed
24th May	Longwood Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
7th June	Manor Farm Swallet	1	Exhaustion
16th Aug	G.B. Cavern	1	Fatal heart attack
1st Oct	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, unwilling to dive sump
8th Nov	Sludge Pit	1	Fall, head injuries

1981

17/19th Jan	(to end of January only) Agen Allwedd, South Wales	1	Boulder fall, broken leg
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This record shows that, since 1951, MRO has responded to 193 call-outs. About 350 people have been helped excluding those for whom we stand by when alerted by an overdue party. More detailed breakdowns of the incidents are possible, of course.

J.D. Hanwell,
Hon Secretary and Treasurer, "Chaumbey",
50 Wells Road,
Wookey Hole,
Wells,
Somerset. BA5 1DN.

21st February 1981

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Cave Rescues and Incidents for the Year ending 31st January 1981

Over the year we have had a wide variety of call outs. Apart from the now usual alerts and searches, we have persuaded a girl to dive back through Sump I in Swildon's, assisted two exhausted girls up pitches, helped two injured boys after they had fallen down pitches, unplugged a stuck caver in Longwood and attended another who suffered a fatal heart attack in nearby G.B. Cavern. At the end of this more than busy year, a large contingent of Mendip cavers went on a "works outing" to help colleagues from South Wales at Agen Allwedd. From this variety, however, we must note that four incidents on Mendip have involved inexperienced teenagers, three of which were led by teachers or instructors rather than club cavers.

Sunday 3rd February 1980

Swildon's Hole

Dr. William Stanton was alerted by the Police from Frome at 1540 hours. He contacted the informants who had correctly remained at the Priddy Green telephone box and learnt that 19-years old Joan Cooper from Bracknell, Berks, was exhausted and unable to climb up the short pitch at the foot of the old Forty Foot Pot. William then telephoned the Belfry and Chris Batstone took charge of the call-out there. Dr. Don Thomson was told of the incident and he advised that the Reviva warm air breather should be used to prevent possible exposure problems.

Mike Duck, Jim Watson and Trefor Roberts were underground within twenty minutes of the call-out and were followed by a five-man party with the Reviva. Other parties were in the cave at the time and able to give assistance. Brian Prewer established a radio link with cavers stood-by at the Belfry from Priddy Green.

Miss Cooper was helped out of the cave by 1630 hours and taken to the Belfry to change and warm up.

Sunday 24th February 1980

Swildon's Hole

Three climbers from Bristol were reported by local cavers to be doing a Long Round Trip earlier in the day. They had been seen underground using maps to find their way. When they had not surfaced by 2330 hours, cavers were stood by at Priddy and the Police informed. The overdue trio surfaced shortly after midnight having under-estimated the difficulty of the trip. One was particularly tired as he had not done much caving before.

Friday 22nd February 1980

Cuckoo Cleeves

David Irwin was contacted by Frome Police at 2000 hours with news that a 14-year old boy in a party from Porchester School, Bournemouth, had fallen and broken a leg. It appears that Nicholas Amor got ahead of another party of local scouts who were also going down the cave. On descending the entrance pitch and hurrying through the ruckle, he is thought to have tried jumping the 13 foot pot! He sustained a bad fracture of the leg.

Cavers at the Hunters' Lodge Inn were alerted and Rod Harper quickly responded with a strong party and essential rescue equipment. Rod used his veterinary's skills to good effect and Amor was soon hauled out to have his injuries inspected by Dr. Don Thomson. He was then taken by ambulance to hospital where he remained for several weeks owing to the severity of the fractures.

Friday 11th April 1980

Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire

The Police at Devizes contacted Brian Prewer and asked him to telephone Chief Inspector Cooper at Corsham regarding a possible incident in Box Stone Mines. Two girls exercising horses near the mines had heard voices that might have been cries for help. A check had showed that no one was thought to have gone down the various entrances; but, a bunch of freshly picked primroses was found near the railway tunnel. The Police wanted a search of the mines to eliminate the possibility of any children being lost there.

Brian alerted Bob Scammell, Keith Newbery and Chris Batstone in the area and asked them to conduct a search of the main routes. Tim Large raised a standby party and David Irwin was advised of the incident. He then collected equipment from the Belfry and made his way to Corsham keeping in radio contact with Eric Dinford.

The search party spent from 1730 to 1915 hours looking around the main routes but found nothing. It was assumed that the children could have entered Box Tunnel and travelled through it so that the voices had been heard from one of the air shafts. The Police called off the search at this point.

Monday 5th May 1980

Browne's Folly Mine, Wiltshire

A call was received by Brian Prewer at 1945 hours from Devizes Police who reported that the parents of four teenagers had informed them of a party missing in the mines. Brian immediately contacted Bob Scammell at Bathford who went straight to the site and got on with the search single handed. Chris Batstone and Martin Bishop stood by.

Bob soon found the missing party of seven youths lightless at Clapham Junction. Apparently, ten had entered the mines earlier after a few had claimed to have been down them the previous week. Then, for some inexplicable and irresponsible reason, the three with good torches left the remainder with failing lights and simply went off to a local public house. It was left to the parents to raise the alarm. All were out of the mines by 2100 hours having been underground in light clothing for about six hours. No one took kindly to the youths regarding the incident as a huge joke and they got a well-deserved dressing down.

Chief Superintendent S.J. Ashley subsequently wrote to thank MRO for helping and paid tribute to Bob Scammell in particular.

Saturday 24th May 1980

Longwood Swallet

At about 1415 hours, Andy Williams went to the Hunters' Lodge Inn and reported that a large man was stuck in Longwood with Geoff Price and another caver on the wrong side of him to give assistance. He was John Hopton from Fishponds, Bristol.

The Police and Bristol Water Works were advised of the situation and Alan Thomas went to the cave to assist, arriving at about 1430 hours. Meanwhile Brian Prewer and Bob Scammell went for hauling gear, whilst Stewart McManus and Tony Knibbs provided back-up. Dr. Peter Glanvill was alerted and Tim Large and Nigel Taylor set up radio contact from the cave to the Belfry. Mr. and Mrs Trim kindly allowed access through the farm and were most helpful.

The victim was soon moved by help from the right direction and was out of the cave by 1600 hours none the worse for his experience.

Saturday 7th June 1980

Manor Farm Swallet

Howard Barker, aged 34 years from Targarth, Powys, and Miss Josephine Laver, aged 25 years, from Salisbury, Wiltshire, went down the cave at 1430 hours. Both had been caving together for several years. A ladder was used on the Entrance Pitch and ropes were carried for September Rift and the pitch in Curtain Chamber. The trip went well until they returned to the pitches on the way out.

When Josephine became exhausted and unable to climb up the awkward September Rift, Barker had to leave the cave for assistance. He reached the Belfry at 1900 hours and explained the situation to Nigel Taylor who raised a party of seven to form a hauling party. Brian Prewer was alerted and the Police informed of the incident.

The BEC party reached the cave with Nigel at 1920 hours and were soon underground. By using a sit harness, it was a straightforward matter to assist Josephine Laver up the rift and then out of the cave. All had surfaced by 2000 hours and everyone stood down. Miss Laver was not hurt and so she returned to the Townsend Campsite, Priddy, with Mr. Barker.

Saturday 16th August 1980

G.B. Cavern

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 1753 hours to report that a caver in G.B. was having trouble with his breathing. The informant had wrongly left the telephone and so further information was unobtainable.

David Irwin was requested to go to the cave at 1755 hours for an on-the-spot assessment and, after experiencing difficulty in making a telephone connection to the Belfry, Brian alerted Marilyn McManus to establish an alternative radio contact there. She also raised Wessex Cave Club members. Fred Davis was called at 1810 hours and a party with Chris Batstone and Dany Bradshaw left the Belfry about the same time. Meanwhile, Dave Irwin reported that 33-year old Ian Miller from Bristol had suffered a heart attack at the foot of one of the climbs in Mud Passage. Dr. Don Thomson was called at 1825 hours and asked to attend. Jim Hanwell was then contacted and all went to the cave.

Fred Davies went underground at 1845 hours and found EAR and ECM being applied by the earlier arrivals. He continued with this until Dr. Don Thomson reached the scene at 1900 hours to report that the patient had died. The deceased was hauled to the surface by 1950 hours and the cave cleared by 2015 hours. Another party below completely missed the entire incident which had lasted only 2½ hours.

Apparently, Ian Miller had no previous caving experience but had requested joining a small well-equipped groups visiting the Ladder Dig Series. He appeared to be in some distress on the way out and then suddenly collapsed. At the Inquest, it was recorded that death had resulted from a heart attack probably brought about by unaccustomed exertion.

Wednesday 1st October 1980

Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by Yeovil Police at about 2230 hours concerning a 14-year old girl who was refusing to return through Sump I. Apparently, two teachers had taken ten girls from Merrywood School, Bristol down the cave at about 1700 hours. The party was well-equipped with wet suits, boots and lamps to a standard beyond that expected for such a group on their third caving trip. Moreover, it was planned to visit Swildon's II via the stream way and sump. One teacher with nine of the girls was met on their way out at the Twenty Foot Pot by Greg Villis and Dave Gill. They learnt that the other teacher had remained, on the far side of Sump I with Rebecca Lane who was refusing to dive back after experiencing some difficulty in going through on the way in. Whilst Greg hurried to Sump I to help, Dave left the cave ahead of the school party to call MRO.

Brian Prewer happened to be in the company of several MRO wardens and cavers on receiving the alert. He contacted David Irwin and Martin Bishop and the first rescue party was underground within 30

minutes of the call-out. A substantial group followed with comforts, warm clothes, the Little Dragon warm air resuscitator and a small breathing apparatus in case Rebecca would prefer it to dive back. A telephone line was established through the sump and Dr. Don Thomson was present. In the event, Rebecca refused all encouragement to help herself. Eventually, with both parties on either side the sump in telephone communication, she was carefully lowered into the pool and hauled through none the worse for the experience. After some hot food and warm air, all made a rapid exit to be clear of the cave by 0200 hours on the Thursday. It is vital to note that the telephone communication was essential to co-ordinate both parties when such a "pull through" technique is used.

Saturday 8th November 1980

Sludge Pit

Anthony Dearling, a Scout Leader mainly involved in introducing novices and those of medium experience on occasional caving weekends to Mendip since 1974, took a party of seven down the cave just before mid-day. Two sixteen years old beginners were present, one being Robert Jackson. All were members of the 2nd Sydenham Scout Group.

After about 2¼ hours underground, the party started its return with the leader moving directly ahead of the two novices in front to speed up the journey out. At this point, Robert Jackson at the rear of the trio missed his footing to fall about 6.5 metres down the rift in the main passage beneath the upper series. He sustained facial injuries and was badly shaken. It appears that he may have fallen owing to the failure of his carbide lamp so that he was without a light when crossing the rift. The incident is thought to have occurred at about 1400 hours. After assessing the extent of Robert's injuries, the leader sent out Susan March and Alan Jackson to raise the alarm.

Brian Prewer was alerted by Yeovil Police at 1530 hours, but was unable to gain more details other than that someone had fallen in the cave since the informants had left the telephone. Brian contacted David Irwin who went straight-away to gather more information at the scene. He found Alan Keen, Adrian Vanderplank and Glyn Bolt from Upper Pitts already on their way to help with hauling gear, ladders and a carrying sheet, they entered the cave less than 30 minutes after the call-out. Meanwhile, Brian stood by a party of six and asked Dr. Don Thomson to attend. The injured boy was able to help himself quite well in the circumstances and was assisted out of the cave by about 1650 hours. Dr. Don Thomson examined his injuries and then he was taken by ambulance to hospital in Bath to have deep cuts stitched and an X-ray.

Weekend 17- 19th January 1981

Agen Allwedd

Three dozen Mendip rescuers went to help cavers in South Wales who were bringing out a patient with a broken leg from Southern Stream Passage. Another two dozen stood by. The full report of this mammoth operation belongs to the South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation of course. However, we may record that the controller, Brian Joplin, found our radios a great help and the Little Dragon warm air breather proved invaluable. We are especially grateful to the Warden of Crickhowell Youth Hostel for his hospitality to all from Mendip.

IMPORTANT Informants must remain at their telephone until contacted by a Warden for full details of any incident.

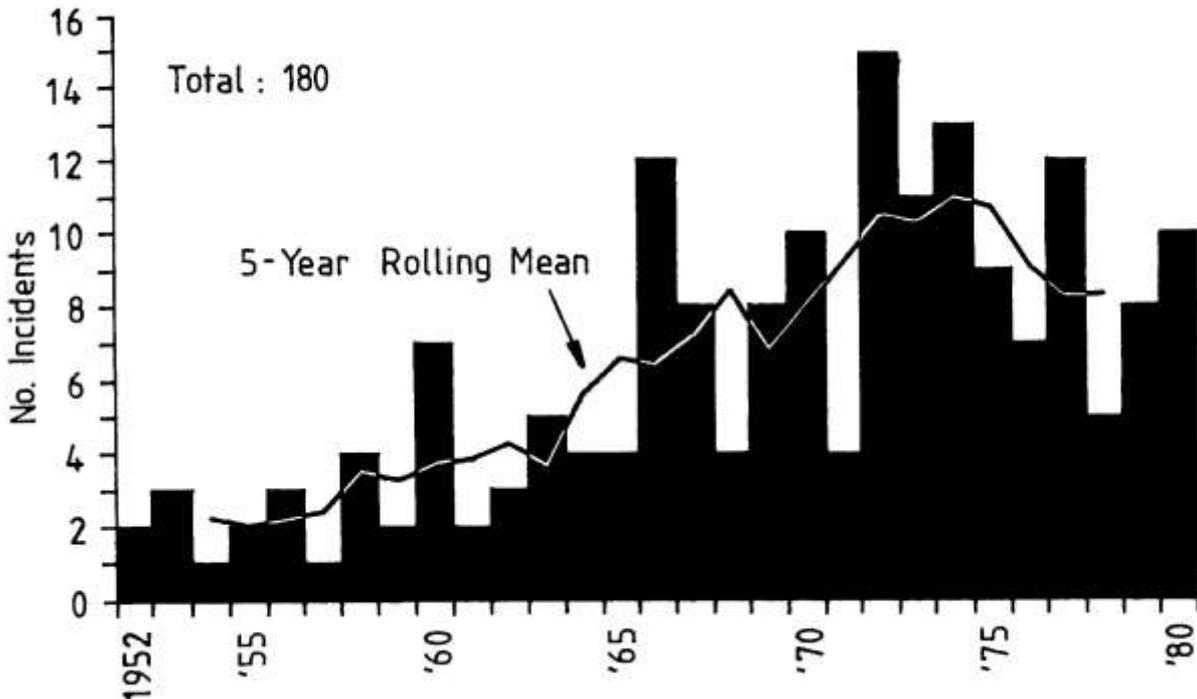
J.D. Hanwell
Hon Secretary & Treasurer
Mendip Rescue Organisation.

30 YEARS OF RESCUES - A PERSPECTIVE

P.G. Hendy

When Jim Hanwell handed me the MRO report, it was suggested that the lists of call-outs since 1951 meant little in themselves, but that, because no two rescues are the same, any analysis of these figures would of necessity be subjective. However, by presenting the data in chart and table form, some interesting features appeared, and I reproduce this below. Many of my comments are in the nature of stating the obvious, but then, some rescues are caused by things so obvious in themselves that it is tempting to wonder why they happen at all.

Number of Call-outs per Year (Mendip caves and local mines only)

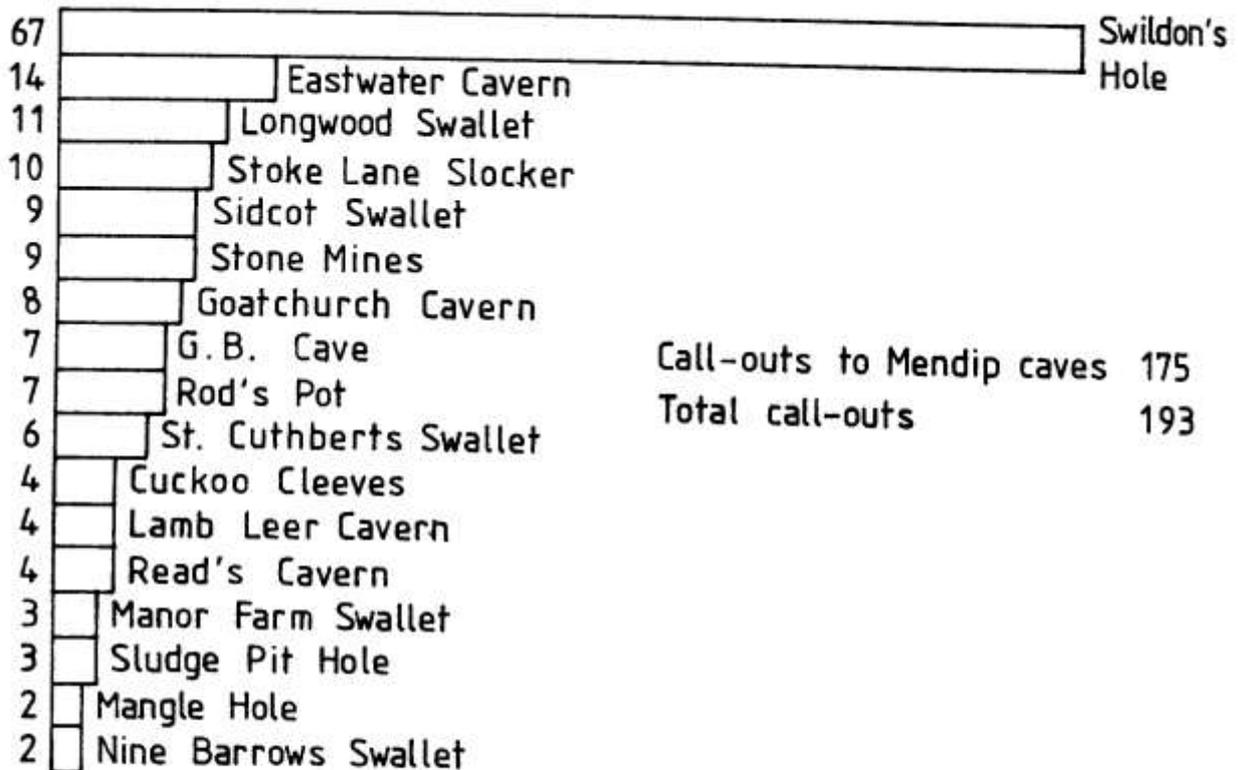


The number of call-outs in each year has increased dramatically since 1966. This is confirmed by the 5-year rolling mean, which tends to level out the actual yearly, fluctuations. The histogram is probably a reflection of the increase in the number of cavers active on Mendip (Hanwell, J.D. (1974) J.WCC. 13 155 pp. 93-94.).

Location of Incidents

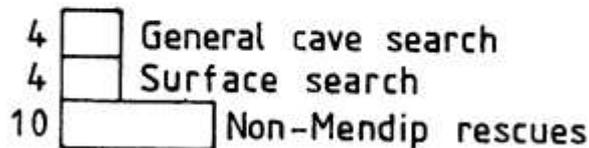
The bar chart overleaf shows the number of call-outs there have been to the Mendip caves. In general, the list reflects the popularity and severity of the various systems. Swildon's Hole stands out, way above the rest. The thought readily comes to mind: did the removal of the Forty Foot Pot by the floods of 1968, thereby easing access to the lower reaches of the cave, cause any increase in the number of rescues from that cave? There were, in fact, 67 rescues from Swildon's in the period covered by the records; 28 in the 17 years to 1968, and 59 in the 12 years subsequently. However, when compared with the total number of rescues from all Mendip caves, it is seen that before 1969 1 in every 2.4 rescues was from Swildon's, while after the flood, only 1 in every 2.9 rescues involved this cave. Thus it appears that the absence of the Forty has not increased the incidence of rescues from Swildon's Hole. Indeed, the removal of this wet pitch may even have made the cave safer!

Location of Incidents



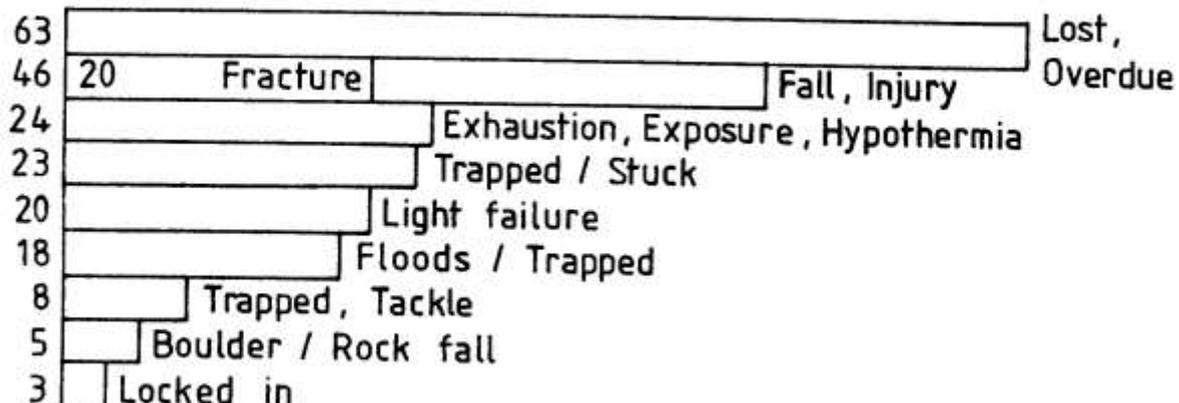
Call-outs to Mendip caves 175
 Total call-outs 193

1 each in : Drunkard's Hole, Rhino Rift, Thrupe Lane Swallet, Ubley Warren Swallet, Wookey Hole



Cause of Call-out (Mendip caves and local mines only)

There were 175 call-outs, due to the following causes:



The total is in excess of 175 as, obviously, some incidents had more than one cause. The 8 incidents under 'Trapped / tackle' are, in the main, failure to provide tackle where it is needed, ie. a return rope for Vicarage Pot in Swildon's.

Mendip caves have only claimed 4 fatalities in the past 30 years; they were:

1959	Swildon's Hole	Hypothermia
1960	Eastwater Cavern	Fall, injuries
1963	Longwood Swallet	Floods, hypothermia
1960	G.B. Cave	Heart attack

The main cause of MRO being called out was parties overdue or lost. Often this is the result of light failure, though insufficient knowledge of the cave (or, more likely, stone mine !) can also cause delay.

There were 67 rescues where medical assistance was, or could have been, necessary (injury, exhaustion, exposure etc.). This is 38% of rescues, and it shows the importance of MRO being able to summon a doctor quickly. Rescues due to natural causes (floods and rock falls) were only occasioned 23 times (13%). The former are, to a certain extent, predictable, and one wonders how many rescues from flooded caves could have been prevented had the parties involved used a bit more common sense.

It is tempting to examine the regularity with which certain types of incident occur in various caves. The table below summarises the data for the ten systems most frequently occurring in the call-out list:

	Lost / Overdue	Trapped	Injury	Fall	Exhaustion / Exposure / Hypothermia	Lights Failed	Floods	Stuck	Tackle	Rock / Boulder Fall	Unable to dive sump	Miscellaneous
Swildon's Hole	16	18	14	16	17	5	8	2	6		3	1
Eastwater Cavern	7	4	2	2	1		1	3	1			
Longwood Swallet	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	1				1
Stoke Lane Slocker	3	4				1	5					1
Sidcot Swallet	1	6	1	1		2		6				
Stone Mines	9					5						
Goatchurch Cavern	5		2	2		2						1
G.B. Cave		2	4	3	1					1		
Rod's Pot	2		5	5		2						
St. Guthbert's Swallet			4	2			2			2		

Taking Swildon's Hole first, it is the scene of 38% of rescues. Of these, 17% are for trapped cavers, 15% for exposure, exhaustion etc., and 15% each for parties lost or overdue, or for falls. Injuries were present in 13% of cavers for whom MRO turned out, and 8% were due to floods. The 3 call-outs due to cavers unwilling to dive the sump from Swildon's II to I are concerning, in that they are a recent phenomenon, probably being caused by people being stretched beyond their current capabilities by inexperienced leaders.

8% of call-outs have been to Eastwater Cavern, where the main reasons have been parties lost or overdue (33%) or trapped (21%).

No other cave claims a large percentage of call-outs. It appears that no single type of incident is predominant in Longwood Swallet, though the increased likelihood of flooding due to the new BWV pumping arrangements must be borne in mind for the future. 36% of rescues from Stoke Lane Slocker were due to flooding, while 21% were due to parties lost or overdue.

The main problem in Sidcot Swallet, that popular but short cave in Burrington Combe, is that of cavers dropping into the Lobster Pot at the end, and then being unable to return without assistance. The entire list of call-outs to the various stone mines at Box, Combe Down and Brown's Folly, etc. is due to parties lost, overdue, or with light failure. Most of these have been groups of children. The moves by CSCC to gate these mines, allowing access only to bona fide cavers, can only help to reduce this kind of incident. The mines are far more extensive and featureless than caves, and far fewer experienced cavers know them really well.

Lost or overdue parties are the commonest reason for MRO being called to Goatchurch Cavern, which is not surprising in view of the popularity of this cave with novices. Fortunately, it is one of our safer caves, and easy to search.

Falls and injuries are the most frequent incidents in G.B. Cave, Rod's Pot, and St. Cuthbert's Swallet.

The tables and comments given above merely serve to describe past experience; no two rescues are the same, and therefore our reactions to them should not become stereotyped. There are lessons to be learnt from the past, and it is comforting to know that the job of MRO is frequently merely to guide the inexperienced back to safety - and hopefully the 'victims' will have learnt from their discomfort. However, more serious incidents are not uncommon, and will continue to occur. I think it is true to say that the MRO is prepared for them, for the next 30 years at least.

ELECTROLYTE BURNS

A.J. Jennings

Recently a caver staying at a Mendip hut was quite badly burned by acid which had leaked from his battery, soaked through his dry gear and gone to work on the area around his kidneys. Whilst caving he was aware of irritation but, thinking it was the battery digging in, he carried on. Not until he and his companions had exited and were changing was the damage seen for what it was. Straight away he doused the burning area with water from a nearby stream. On returning to the hut no medical aid or advice could be offered to the sufferer and because of the hour of the day he was turned away from Wells Hospital and told to report next morning.

As users of lead-acid and alkali cells we are all aware that the electrolyte contained therein can do us harm or, more to the point, do others harm. "It won't happen to me", but it may, hence this article which is simply intended to concentrate the reader's mind on the dangers of these liquids when in contact with the skin. Firstly, let us consider some of the ways electrolyte may come into contact with the skin:

1. Spillage when topping up or filling cells.
2. Overfilling, causing venting when the cell is charged. In the case of those with NiCad conversion jobs, surplus electrolyte may find its way between cell and case.
3. Intrusion of cell by cave waters resulting in feed-back of the diluted electrolyte on charging, or the cell being left in a warm place, ie. the boot of a car. (Have you ever wondered how that fly-sheet was ruined by an electrolyte burn?)
4. Splitting or holing of lead-acid case as a result of heavy wear or a hard knock.
5. Failure to secure filler or vent plugs correctly.

These five examples are the ones that spring most readily to mind and are therefore the most obvious. But from these may occur a danger that is probably never pondered on except by those who have had the misfortune to have had electrolyte spilled on caving clothing, particularly the inside surface of a wet suit. In this instance the electrolyte will, not readily being able to inflict itself onto the neoprene or its backing, revert to a crystalline state awaiting resolution. Imagine if you will a wetsuit contaminated in this way, the wearer perspiring while walking to the cave, a slight irritation, "just a bit tight", "some grit rubbing", "No bother" followed perhaps by a wet trip. By the time realisation dawns it may be too late. Think about that and then bear this in mind: surgery may be the only answer to badly burned skin tissue.

In Descent 32, Everett seems to advocate neutralising an acid or alkali burn with dilute electrolyte. 'from the opposite type of cell'. For this advice he was taken to task by Forder (Descent 33) who, as a chemist, says that this could possibly be the worst thing one could do, and would most likely exacerbate an already bad situation. The only treatment that can be recommended for these burns is washing with water, the more the better, and then seeking medical aid. Forder recalls how he once spent several minutes washing electrolyte off his skin, no more than ten minutes after first noticing a burning sensation; nevertheless the burn took two months to heal.

Forder's views are supported by Dr. Franklin (Descent 36) who describes Everett's remedy as criminally negligent. He says, "Both acid and alkali electrolyte are ignored on the skin at ones peril. When seepage has been insidious as through a wetsuit and the early sensations ignored through the distraction of caving effort one must expect trouble. Irrigation with, preferably, flowing water for as long as is practicable in the circumstances, ideally fifteen minutes plus will give optimum results. For a burn in a cave without water even irrigation with the accurately directed contents of the bladder is better than no treatment. Such fluid is sterile and as most such burns are on the lower back it will instantly serve to identify ones true friends.

Everett in further correspondence (Descent 34) relates the time when he first got electrolyte in his eye. His first reaction was to rinse it with water but this proved ineffective. He then used dilute vinegar and this brought instant relief. The acid, extremely diluted, neutralised the stubborn burn. He goes on, "since writing the first article I have learnt that vinegar was used when spillage occurred in the assembly of NiFe cells at the Redditch factory."

Reprinted, from the CSCC Newsletter, New Year, 1981. The author states that this article is written as a piece of information only. Comments or observations should be sent to the Editor.

FROM THE LOG

7th December 1980 Manor Farm Swallet R. Websell, M. Foyle, P. Watts. Unsuccessful attempt to climb Bracknell Aven, so went to next aven and climbed up by lassoing a scaffold bar and hauling up a ladder. At the top one way goes to a too-tight rift which needs banging to a small passage beyond. Above the climb is a descending passage with a branch leading back to a ledge in the initial aven. There might be more passage at the top and something leading towards Bracknell Aven. Worth taking a maypole down to get up this as there is still passage at the end.

7th Dec. Lionel's Hole P. & A. Moody. Continued in the dig in Sump Chamber. The dig fill was easily removed and progress was very rapid, but the choke just continued upwards. At the end of the day we had made 6ft progress - we appear to be in a rift about 1ft wide running parallel to the main passage. It is choked to both left and right.

20th Dec. Swildon's Hole P. Dunk and B. Peak to Passchendaele, B. Woodward and P. Moody to 7 to place dye detectors. The first two accomplished their task but we found 5 badly sumped; we were unable to free-dive. On the way out we had a look at Tumble Down Dig and a Passage high in the roof of 4. Rather than do a high level traverse into the passage I thrutched up the inside of the rift. A couple of high narrow rifts were passed to a tube blocked by a rock behind which could be heard a stream. Brian joined me and we decided to push the oxbow. The offending boulder was quickly removed and the passage followed for 10ft to meet the stream - not the main stream way! We followed a superb tube up-dip for 80ft or so. The stream emerged from a tiny crack but the tube carried straight on through a couple of ducks to a descending passage and a sump. There are plenty of minor leads going off. On returning to the main stream way we checked the 4 dig and found it was running muddy. After 7 years of digging the bloody thing we just walk into a bypass which has just been waiting to be found since 4 was discovered.

10th January 1981 Swildon's 4 P. & A. Moody, M. Faulkner, P. Dunk. (SMCC) Off to the new extension with digging tools. A couple of side leads were checked on the way to the terminal sump. At the sump bailing produced an airspace and Alison was able to get into a low passage. The stream last seen in the dip tube was found to flow into the duck. Fifty feet from the sump we reached another low duck, passed to walking-size passage and another duck leading immediately to a sump. We established a minute airspace but could not get through. Prospects excellent.

17th Jan. Swildon's 4 P. & A. Moody, P. Dunk. Put a Grade 5 survey through the ducks and checked out all side passages. A rough plot indicates the present end near Fault Chamber and some 40ft below it.

24th Jan. Swildon's 4 P. & A. Moody, P. Dunk, B. Woodward. In the new passage, draining lowered the level of the sump but it did not break, so Pete used a mini bottle to check it out. An easy dive passed the sump, to another a few feet further on. Decided to leave further exploration until the stream has dried up.

30th Jan. Eastwater Cavern G. Bolt, J-Rat, Tony (?- MNRC) P. Hendy. Completed the dams fitted last week at the head of the 380ft Way. The water was successfully diverted down the Traverse using a fire hose. The small choke to the left at the bottom of the 380ft Way can now cope with all remaining trickles, and the dig became much drier.

30th Jan. Longwood Swallet P. & A. Moody. Renold's Passage. Nearly there - three more trips?